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WASHINGTON - In her first piece of legislation of the 110th Congress, U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., today introduced a bill to fully authorize the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection project. Congressman Charlie Melancon, D-La., introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives today (see attachment).

The series of levees, locks and other systems through Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes will, when complete, serve to protect about 120,000 people and 1,700 square miles of land against storm surges such as those caused by Hurricane Katrina.

"This project is about the life or death of thousands of people, a way of life, and a vital part of our state's economy," said Sen. Landrieu, who with Rep. Melancon and others worked unsuccessfully through the final hours of the 109th Congress to authorize the project, which was originally authorized in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000. The bill directed the Army Corps of Engineers to deliver a favorable feasibility report by December 31st of that year, but while the recommendation was favorable, it was submitted more than a year late and the authorization expired. Congress has not delivered a new WRDA bill since.

"The people of Lafourche and Terrebonne have been patient through nearly seven long and challenging years, watching essential hurricane protection be promised to them once, only to be kicked down the field time and time again," Sen. Landrieu said.

"Over a hundred thousand people in south Louisiana currently have almost no protection from deadly hurricanes and the storm surges and flooding they cause," said Rep. Melancon. "Morganza to the Gulf is vitally important to the survival of these communities. They have been levying local taxes on themselves for years to pay for their share of the project and, sadly, the federal government has dragged its feet in doing its part. With this legislation, Senator Landrieu and I hope to fulfill the promise Congress made to the people of Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes seven years ago, and finally move forward with protecting south Louisiana from hurricanes and flooding."

Efforts to secure authorization for the Morganza project stretched into the early morning hours of December 9, 2006, but were thwarted by a procedural "hold" placed by Senator Tom Coburn, R-Okla. Through a spokesman, Sen. Coburn has derided the hurricane protection project and likened it to "pork-barrel" spending.

"Anyone who considers levees to be 'pork' clearly doesn't understand the devastation of seeing your home flooded as so many were after hurricanes Katrina and Rita," Sen. Landrieu said. "Congress recognized the need for this project more than six years ago, and cannot let its intent be undermined by bureaucratic delays at the Corps of Engineers. Congressman Melancon and I will not give up our fight until this project is made whole again, as the 2000 law directed."

"Today marks the start of the new 110th Congress, and I think it is important that our first order of business be addressing hurricane and flood protection for south Louisiana," Rep. Melancon said. "Pushing forward with building Morganza to the Gulf is a crucial step, and Senator Landrieu and I are renewing our efforts to finally get this project moving. As Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reminded us, we can't afford to put hurricane protection for coastal Louisiana on the back burner any longer. The future of our way of life depends on taking action now."

The legislation introduced today would authorize the entire Morganza to the Gulf project, as originally authorized in 2000, at its current estimated cost of \$886.7 million, with 65 percent, or about \$576.4 million of the amount intended to be funded by the federal government. The legislation also credits any funds already expended by state and local authorities towards the 35 percent non-federal share of about \$310.3 million.

Click [here](#) for a full copy of the bill text.

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